

World

Celebrate our links

with the animal kingdom on this special day

Animal Day

Saturday 4th October 2003 sees the launch of World Animal Day in the UK, with animal-related events due to take place throughout the country. Started in 1931, this particular date was chosen because it is the feast day of St Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals. Over the years the event has been celebrated in many places around the world, but this year plans are afoot to make it a special day to remember in the UK.

Get involved!

Your school can get actively involved in this year's celebrations by organising your own event. There are lots of things that you can do – for example:

- 'Our Pets' is a perennial favourite with young children. Provide a good selection of books about pets and make a display based on the children's own artwork in a variety of media, written descriptions and simple graphs.
- Challenge the children to create their own fantasy pets, using a range of art and modelling materials. Can they create something with ears like a rabbit, a face like a fish and the body of a horse? What will their animal be called? More serious animal welfare issues could be introduced by asking children to think about the needs of their pet. What would it eat? Where would it live? How would they care for it? What would happen to it if the child's family went away on holiday? Get them to write care instructions for their creatures.
- Have a 'Pets' party'. Help the children

to make animal masks to wear, and let them bring along some soft toy animals as guests, making bowls of food for them from Plasticine and modelling materials. Encourage them to think about what kind of food their animal would need, and to think about their guests' seating arrangements. How might they entertain their guests? Party games could have an animal slant (eg a game of 'sheepdog and sheep' instead of tag). You could ask parents to make a small cash donation for the party and give the proceeds to a local animal shelter or favourite animal charity.

- Undertake an ongoing animal-related topic at the beginning of the autumn term, aiming to finish just before 4 October. Ask a local library, shopping mall, sports centre or supermarket if the children's work can be exhibited there on World Animal Day itself, but contact them well in advance as it's surprising how soon display space can get booked up at such venues.

International events

Over the past few years schools in many other countries have organised activities to celebrate World Animal Day. In Lithuania last year there were special performances and displays by school children to commemorate the opening of a new education centre at a local zoo, while in Malta a primary school was host to a major event where children from across the island were involved in displays of work and performances. Australia celebrates the day with an annual schools poster competition. Themes in recent years



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have included 'What makes an animal special from the tip of its nose to the end of its tail?' and 'Animals having fun'. The winners receive book tokens at a special awards ceremony, and the children's work is put on public display.

On the web

- The website www.worldanimalday.org.uk contains details about the activities that have already been planned in the UK for this year's celebrations, including suggestions for further activities along with guidelines for schools wanting to organise their own event. After World Animal Day, the site will publish a round-up of events throughout the country, so if your school does something special for the day, please send in your news.
- In addition to the World Animal Day site, the following sites provide free educational downloads and pages for children:
 - www.rspca.org.uk
 - www.ncdl.org.uk
 - www.cats.org.uk
 - www.naturewatch.org
- The Animal Rescuers site at <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/clifford.atkinson/Rescue/index.html> provides a directory of UK animal sanctuaries along with useful web links.

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